NUMB. IV.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

'Tis Doubt, — Complaint, — Reply, — Chit-Chat : —
'Tis THIS, *To-day* — *To-morrow*, THAT. *Prior.*

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22. 1734.

WHEN I was a Boy, I delighted to amuſe myſelf with a Collection of Pebbles ; which I carried in my Pocket, to a Pond, on the ſide whereof I wou'd ſit me down, and with great Gravity, and Compoſure of Countenance, toſs a Stone, now and then, into the Middle of the Water ; obſerving, with no ſmall Satisfaction, and Curioſity, the Progreſſive Expanſion of *Circles* ; which, taking Beginning, from the Central Diſturbance of the Water, form'd, and puſh'd on, One another, till the Laſt, and Largeſt, became wide enough to ſtrike the Shores of the Pool, all round ; and, then, the Surface recover'd its Smoothneſs.

I DISCERN, in this recollected Idea, the Image of my preſent Amuſement — We are ſtill but *Children*, of a different *Growth* ; and there is a Mortifying *Reſemblance* between the Paſtimes of our Youth, and Manhood, not only in their *Choice*, but their *Importance*. — It is Difficult for a Great *General*, a *Judge*, or a *Prime Miniſter*, to diſcover *Himſelf*, in this diminutive Compariſon ; yet, the Reſt of the World, comparing them, will ſee the *Likeneſs* of the Picture ; and the Buſieſt Orbs, they acted in, will, once, as Calmy *forget* them, as the Waters in my Pool ſubſided, from their tranſient Diſturbance by the Pebble.

SO too, *my Labours*, I am ſenſible, will be *born*, and *die*, like a Bubble ; yet is my Vanity too active for my Reaſon, and I am renewing my Childiſh Diverſion, and can delight myſelf with the Enlargement of my Circles ; which, having begun with the degenerate *Stage*, will grow wider and wider, by Degrees, till they take in the moſt Diſtant Quarters, of the *Dull*, the *Gay*, and the *Thoughtful*.

BUT that, I have no Regard to *Regularity*, in my Proceſs, I ought to diſcourſe *firſt*, *of the Firſt*, out of the Reverence I bear to a Certain reſpected Order of Men, and to the *Forms*, which their Practice makes *Venerable* : Yet, having remark'd, that the TRUTH they invite us to *ſee*, lies ſo deeply Entrench'd behind thoſe dry and methodical Baſtions, wherewith they fortify, and ſurround it, that we are contented to *believe* It is *there*, without concerning ourſelves to *ſcale* its Diſtinctions, — I therefore fly from the Preſumption of aſſaulting their *Logical Citadels*, and content myſelf with this humble Wiſh for their Benefit — That They wou'd ſtrip *Formality* from their Eloquence — *Impatience* from their Diſputes — *Inſufficiency* from their Reaſonings — And *Animoſity* from their Reſentments : that, ſo, their Lights might ſhine, unclouded ; and the World, without Regret, allow that Homage to their *Sincerity*, which will be, tenaciouſly, *withheld* from their *Pretenſions*.

PUTTING off, therefore, from this *Venerable* Coaſt, I ſhall drop Anchor in the Haven of *Activity* ; the Province of the *Politic* and *Ambitious* : Yet, methinks, I ſhould retract this Metaphor ; ſince It is unreaſonable to miſtake for a *Harbour*, a wild, and open, Beach ; where there is no Shelter from the Sea, that *beats Inward* ; nor any Likelihood Either of Reſt, or Safety, but from *Change* of *Situation*.

HOW miſtakingly did our too humble Anceſtors, content themſelves, under a conſcious Superiority in Courage, and Honeſty, to believe that They were Leſs dext'rous *Intriguers*, Leſs penetrating *Stateſmen*, than their Neighbours ! — The Vanity of thoſe preſuming Cenſurers, hath now been taught, to *know us better* : We are become, within theſe few Years, a *Nation* of *Politicians*. — Men, who have no higher Notions of the *Bleſſings* of *Liberty*, than they derive from certain, *ſenſible Arguments*, which it intitles them to expect, for Giving up their Share of it, to the moſt *Liberal Reaſoner*, carry the Humour of their *free-born Sentiments* to ſo whimſical a Degree of Extravagance, as to value themſelves upon their *Freedom*, even againſt the Honeſt Gentlemen, to whom they have *ſold* it ; and, after having made the moſt, of Their Claim, in the Conſtitution of their Country, *join* the Clamours of the *diſintereſted Patriot*, againſt *bought Voices*, and *Corruption*.

METHINKS the ridiculous Frequency of this Obſervation, which Every Man might make, in Every Corner, were he unbiaſs'd enough to reflect impartially, ſhou'd either make *needleſs* the Endeavours, or a little cool the Expectation, of our political weekly Writers. — There is Great Spirit, and Force, in ſome of the Writings of theſe Gentlemen ; and ſuch indeed is the Power of their Eloquence, that it is none of the leaſt Pleaſant Remarks which may be made on its Effects, to obſerve thoſe *Enemies Enroll'd*, whoſe *Duty* it is to defeat it, taking Pains to *illuſtrate*, *unveil*, and *enforce*,

enforce, its moſt dangerous Hints, where ever they happen to be left obſcure, and myſterious — yet, one Thing, in the Hurry of their Zeal, Even Thoſe Active Reformers ſeem to have forgotten; and it is This — that, while they are Refining the Ideas of Government, They are outſtretching, not only the *Wiſh*, but the very *Conception* of thoſe Objects, they attempt to work upon; for they rather confound, than enlighten, the Multitude. — And truly I am apt to believe, that the Beſt Succeſs they can hope for from the Event of theſe Elaborate Illuſtrations, will be like the Converſion of honeſt *Squanto*, the *American*; upon whom, a *Paſtor*, of Eminent Piety, was ambitious of Diſplaying his Influence, and took Occaſion to ask him, before ſome Reverend Aſſociates, who had accompanied him to the moſt Solemn Proof He cou'd give of his *Attachment* to *Chriſtianity*, "Whether He did "not perceive himſelf to be *inwardly comforted*, "and *refreſhed*, by the *Holy Cup?* — *Yes*, anſwer'd "*Squanto* (with his native Simplicity, and Inno-"cence) *It was very Good*, — *But* RUM *is better*.

THERE is a Coarſeneſs in the *Popular* Palates, which will always be Returning to their *Rum:* So that, tho' it is Eaſy to intoxicate them, with *Liquors* of a *finer* Quality, They but rage, and roar, for an Hour, and then, — *ſleep away* the *Impreſſion:* inſomuch that, barring ſome tumultuous Changes which have been the Effect of a *firſt Fury*, It is Rarely they derive Events agreeable to their Expectation, Even with Reſpect to the Hopes, or Ambition, of their Leaders; But *never*, with Reſpect to *Themſelves:* For, with Regard to the Condition of this Broadeſt Part of a Body Politic, It is of little perſonal Conſequence what *Species* of Government they are ſubject to: — There will always be *One Spike* of the *Calthrop* pointed directly *againſt* them: And they muſt for ever find it the ſame, tho' they *turn it*, a thouſand Times over.

WHEN I purſue this Reflection to its Extent, and, from the Heat and Turbulence of Claſhing Spirits in a divided Nation, look forward, to the *Little Conſequence* of their mutual Bitterneſs, Either to its Agents, or its Authors, I contract myſelf like a contented Snail, within the Safeguard of my Shell, and to compenſate for my want of Activity, liſten with Pity, to the Winds, and Rains, which incommode the *Livelier* Inſects, whoſe Wings are *wet*, all round me.

YET, if, inſtead of the *Spectacles*, which, I mentioned in my Laſt to have been in our Family, from the Reign of King *Pepin*, I had the good Fortune to be Maſter of a Pair of *Political Balances*, I ſhou'd take infinite Delight to be *Weighing Expectations*, for my Neighbours, while they are hot in their Evening Diſputes, at a Club; that ſo I might Diſcover to the Neceſſary Exactneſs, the Value of Each good Citizen's Share, in a *Change* of the *Miniſtry*, or a *Revolution*. — One might hope, from a *Debtor*, and *Creditor*, of this new kind, to adjuſt the very Degree of Defiance, and Faction, to which a *Taylor*, for Example, ought to *let himſelf out*, in his Indignation, againſt the Weakneſs of a Prime Miniſter; — and how many *Barley-Corns* beyond *Him*, It is allowable, in point of Proſpect, and Diſtinction, to indulge Invectives and Sedition, to the *Deputy* of the *Ward*, or the *Alderman*.

I AM almoſt afraid, It wou'd be found (to borrow a *Simile* becoming a *Prompter*) that, whatever Change there might be in the *Scene*, The Good Patriots, I have been naming, wou'd be ſtill but *Spectators* of the *Show*, and poſſeſs the *ſame Bench* they were plac'd on, at their Entrance into the Theatre: — And, if ſo, methinks, the Violence, with which Men maintain, and propagate, Opinions, in the Truth or Falſhood whereof they have ſo little immediate Intereſt, favours of the ſame inſignificant Vivacity in *Politicks*, which is ſo beautifully aſcrib'd to *Life*, by *Shakeſpear*, in one of his Tragedies.

— *It is a* Tale,
Told by an Ideot — *Full of* SOUND, *and* FURY:
Signifying — NOTHING! —

YET, (for I wou'd preſerve myſelf Impartial) tho' the Declaimers againſt Men in Power, are, with Regard to their *Private* Condition, more diſturb'd, I think, than they need be, there is a *Publick* Light, in which the Malignancy of Individuals conduces evidently to the General Benefit. — And, under this View, it wou'd be as unreaſonable for a Man of Moderation to condemn the *Loud* and the *Angry*, as for an Honeſt Fellow to take Umbrage, at the ſetting up a Pair of Stocks, or a Whipping-Poſt: — It is ſo natural for *Pride*, to aſſociate itſelf with *Power*, that a *Little* Inſolence in the *People*, hath ſometimes prevented an *Exceſs* of it in the *Miniſter:* Whence many a Bad Act remains undone, from a Senſe of Danger, in the Doing it.

SO that, according to the ſalutary Determination of ſome of my Good Friends in the *Temple*, there being, *much to be ſaid on Both Sides*, I will e'en be Provident in my Purpoſe, and *Lie by*, till I have *heard Reaſon* from Each Party; After which I ſhall know, as well as another, *What Wind It is proper to ſail with.* — Truly, there is no Falſe Heraldry, in Bearing Arms, for the *Uſe*, and *Diſtinction*, of their Wearer; and I have been told, that there are *Boroughs*, in more Places than one, to whoſe Conſideration, if ſome People are as wiſe as they ſhou'd be, a BROOMSTICK might be recommended, upon Occaſion, with no Diſhonour, or Diſadvantage, to the Sender — We have a Dry, enforcing, Faculty, that is peculiar to our Family, by the Help whereof we are ſure to be *Felt* in our Arguments; And That is more than can be ſaid of Every Body, who is plac'd where he ſhou'd ſpeak to the Purpoſe. —

CONTENTING myſelf with having offer'd the *Hint*, I leave its Event to be found from the Wiſdom of Thoſe, who ſhou'd *take* it. But, becauſe I will run no Hazard of ſuch a Tranſpoſition by *Choice*, as our *Laureat*'s Half-Brother, and Nameſake, *Sir Francis*, fell into by *Blunder*, when He found Himſelf on the *Wrong Side* of his Purpoſe, I hereby enter my Proteſt, before Hand, againſt All *Encomiums* upon *Wine*, and *Tobacco*, Two Commodities, I can never be brought to ſupport any Schemes for the *Improvement* of — But, whoſe Dangerous Effects I am ſo naturally an Enemy to, that, I ſhall ever be cautious how I *ſwallow* the Firſt; And take Care to *ſmoak* the Second, at *due Diſtance*; for Fear of a *Stink*, which I have obſerv'd to hang about the Cloaths of ſome People, who *ſtick too cloſe* to the Uſe of it.

Printed for J. PEELE, at *Locke's Head*, in *Amen-Corner*, *Pater-noſter Row*:
Where LETTERS to the AUTHOR are taken in.

[*Price Two-Pence.*]

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